

CORNELL EXTENSION BULLETIN 1009

POSTURE & FOUNDATION GARMENTS

Janet Reed

NEW YORK STATE COLLEGE OF HOME ECONOMICS

CONTENTS

GOOD POSTURE AIDS HEALTH AND BEAUTY.....	3
What is good posture?.....	4
FOUNDATION GARMENTS AID GOOD POSTURE.....	6
Selection of foundation garments.....	6
BRASSIERES	7
Selection of size	7
Selection of bust cup size	7
Style of brassiere	9
How to put on a brassiere correctly	9
Check the fit	10
GIRDLES AND CORSETS	10
Choose the right garment	10
Choose the best fit	12
Size and hip type	12
Length	13
Alterations	14
How to put on a girdle	14
Check the fit	14
CORSELETS	15
Size	15
Check the fit	16
LAUNDERING FOUNDATION GARMENTS	16

AUGUST 1958

A publication of the
 New York State College of Home Economics
 a unit of the State University of New York,
 at Cornell University

POSTURE & FOUNDATION GARMENTS

Janet Reed

GOOD POSTURE AIDS HEALTH AND BEAUTY

A woman of any age can have an attractive well-proportioned figure if she has good posture, adequate exercise, follows a sensible diet, and wears properly fitted foundation garments.

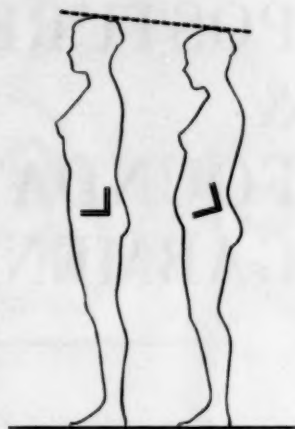
It is possible to achieve good posture, even though poor posture habits may have been developed early in life. Developing good posture requires a knowledge of posture faults, a strong desire to do something about it, and the will power to work at posture until it improves. In some cases corrective exercises may be needed. Frequently, the proper foundation garment will help support the body and assist in developing and maintaining good posture.

Posture is an expression of yourself. How you stand, sit, and walk shows others something about your attitudes, your state of mind, your general health, your habits, and the care and attention you give your body. Since the posture to which you are accustomed soon becomes the most comfortable, strive to make a habit of standing and walking erectly.

Standing and walking erectly can add inches to your height (Figure 1). The woman who carries herself well catches attention in any crowd. Good clothes do not necessarily make the woman, but good posture helps to make the woman look well in her clothes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: The information about posture is taken from Cornell Extension Bulletin 535, "The Woman and Her Posture," by Mrs. Helen Powell Smith. This bulletin is now out-of-print.

The way in which you stand affects the health of your whole body. Good posture gives the body organs more room to do their work. If the chest is slumped, it is harder for the lungs to function properly. As you grow older, the muscle tone of the body decreases, and muscles do not give as much support: the shoulders tend to sag; the pelvis tips; and the stomach is thrust forward (Figure 1). This causes the base of the spine to move forward also, creating more pressure on the abdominal wall and abdominal organs. When the whole body mechanism is thrown out of line, backache and tiredness may result.



1. A tilted pelvis thrusts stomach forward and hips out. Good posture can add inches to your height.

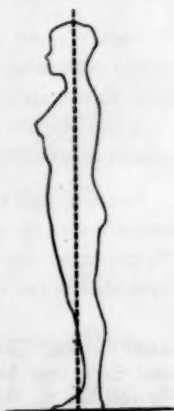
Posture also has a relationship to feet. When the body slumps, the lower point of body balance shifts forward from its proper place at the ankle. This causes the feet to be thrown out of balance and may lead to foot trouble.

What is good posture?

Good posture is relaxed posture, but to relax does not mean to collapse. The three main divisions of the body—head, chest, and hips—should be balanced directly over one another (figure 2). They should be in a balanced position whether you are standing, walking, sitting, working, or sleeping. Good posture is a 24 hour-a-day job.

Good standing posture involves:

- Head erect and level
- Chin in and parallel with the ground
- Chest high
- Shoulders level, swinging free, and relaxed
- Abdomen flat, held up and in
- Lower back flat and tucked under
- Legs straight, with knees relaxed
- Feet parallel, with toes pointed straight ahead

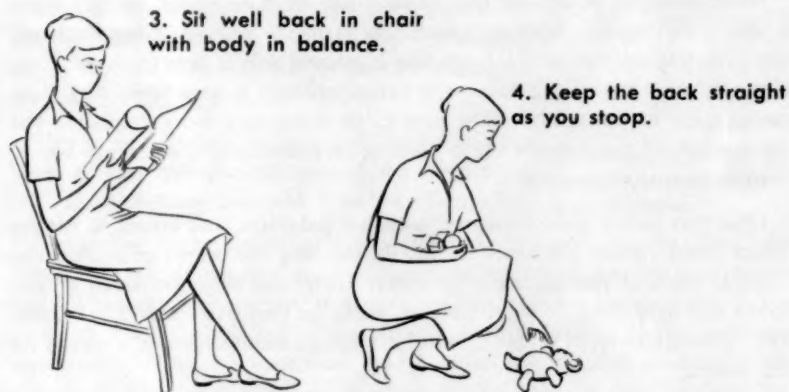


2. If you are standing correctly, an imaginary line can be drawn from the top of the skull through ear, neck, shoulders, hips, knees, and instep.

As you walk, maintain the same balanced body position. Point your toes straight ahead, keeping your feet parallel and close together. Swing your weight from the heel through the outside half of the foot, and push off with your toes. Keep your knees slightly bent, letting your body swing easily and gracefully.

A good sitting posture is one that can be maintained for reasonably long periods of time without the body becoming unduly tired. Sit back into your chair, keeping your back straight. Head and shoulders should be balanced over the hip section of your body. For best posture have feet flat on the floor, knees together. Or cross the legs just back of the knee or at the ankle (Figure 3).

Use your body correctly as you work. Let every household task be a posture exercise. Maintain good posture as you stand. Sit while you work if you wish, but remember to keep your body straight. Lean forward from your hips and reach out instead of just reaching from your shoulders.



As you bend or stoop, bend at the knees or hips, not the back. Use your leg muscles rather than back muscles (Figure 4). Correct working heights help maintain good posture.

Rest before you get tired. Tired muscles that let you slump become sagging muscles. Ten minutes of complete relaxation will rest tired muscles and help prevent poor posture.

Poor sleeping posture caused by sagging bed springs can cause back pain. A good mattress should give equal support to all parts of the body.

FOUNDATION GARMENTS AID GOOD POSTURE

Even the lightest of foundation garments serves as a reminder to stand tall, and therefore helps maintain good posture. As muscles sag, and muscle tone of the body is lost, a firmer support may be needed. If the body has become badly out of alignment, a heavier garment may be needed to steady the pelvis, then gently but firmly help return the body muscles and tissues to a more normal position.

There are foundation garments for every figure, every costume, and every pocketbook. How can you find the garment that will give you the most satisfaction in comfort, health, and beauty?

Selection of foundation garments

The modern active woman demands that foundation garments be comfortable, yet support and enhance her figure. Care in the selection of such a garment will help her to achieve these results, and she will get the most for her money.

Much money is wasted on foundation garments. One reason for this waste is that many women purchase foundation garments without trying them on. The only way you can be absolutely sure a garment will fit is to try it on. Even if the style is one that you have worn before, changes in your figure may make the garment fit differently. Take time to sit down, and move around to test the comfort of the garment. If a garment isn't comfortable when you buy it, chances are that it doesn't fit.

Once you find a good corsetiere, trust her judgment, and return to her for advice about further purchases. If you do not have the benefit of a corsetiere, learn as much as you can about your own figure, and about the kinds of garments that have done the most for you. Build on your past experience. Learn, too, to recognize types of fabric used in these garments; there is a reason for the design.

If you order garments by mail, be sure to follow exactly the directions given in the catalogue.

Fashion and foundations go hand in hand. Some figure molding fashions require a smooth foundation garment as well as a good figure. When you are shopping for a new dress, it is a good idea to wear the foundation that you plan to wear with the dress. If you sew, you have already learned what a difference the right foundation garment can make in the fit of a dress.

Remember that no foundation garment can perform miracles, regardless of the claims made for it. However, it can aid good posture, mold and control the flesh, and give a smooth body line.

BRASSIERES

A correctly fitted brassiere should be comfortable, give a good appearance, and support delicate breast tissues. Many women unknowingly wear the wrong brassiere. Poorly fitted brassieres which constrict the breasts can break down connective tissue and cause a pendulous condition. A brassiere that is too full through the cups may strain the tissue because of lack of support.

Brassieres can be bought in a great variety of designs and fabrics. The neckline of the dress helps to determine the design of the brassiere—off-shoulder, halter, strapless, or plunging neckline. A dress which fits snugly over the diaphragm might look smoother with a long line brassiere.

When you select a brassiere for fit, you should consider size, size of bust cup, and the style of the brassiere.

Selection of size

Manufacturers differ as to how to measure for size. No method of measuring is absolutely accurate for all figures. The only way to be sure a brassiere fits properly is to try it on.

This is one method to help you determine size: Take a snug measurement around the diaphragm, just under the bust and add 5 inches (Figure 5).

For example, if the underbust measurement is 29 inches, add 5 inches; the size will be 34. If the total is an odd number, in general, take the next largest size. When the brassiere size is determined this way, the brassiere will fit the frame of the body and not be too tight at the diaphragm. If the underbust measurement is 33 inches or more, add 3 inches instead of 5 inches to determine size. This figure may have soft flesh and measurements can be deceiving.

Some manufacturers suggest determining size by taking an easy measurement over the fullest part of the bust, and others suggest determining size by taking a measurement under the arms and over the chest wall. You might want to take all three measurements on yourself to see how they compare. Measurements should be taken over a brassiere.

Selection of bust cup size

The size of the brassiere has nothing to do with bust cup size. Any size cup can be found on any size figure. Bust cups come in sizes from AAA to E, but not all manufacturers make all sizes.



5. Measure for bra size: underbust measure plus 5 inches.

Bust cups are designed for the following breast developments:

AAA and AA cups—very small. These are sometimes called teen-age or junior bras. Some manufacturers even make a brassiere with no actual cup, designed for the young girl whose breasts are first developing.

A cup—small

B cup—average

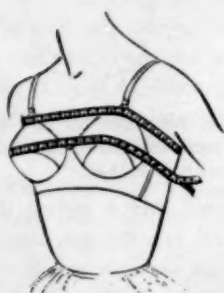
C cup—full

CC cup—full, pendulous, youthful bust. The breast is firmer than that of a figure requiring a D cup

D cup—heavy, pendulous bust.

E cup—very large, heavy, pendulous bust

There is no good measure of bust cup size. Experienced corsetieres can judge by looking at you the size cup you need. However, some manufacturers suggest the following method of determining bust cup size.



**6. Measure for bust cup size:
overbust measure
less chest measure.**

Take a snug measurement over the chest wall, above the bust line and up under the arm (Figure 6). Now take an easy measurement over the fullest part of the bust. The difference between these two measurements is a guide to bust cup size.

If bust measures:

The same or less than chest, buy AA or AAA

1-2 inches more than chest, buy an A cup

2-3 inches more than chest, buy a B cup

3-4 inches more than chest, buy a C cup

4 or more inches more than chest, buy a D cup

This is only a guide. It is much better to try on a brassiere to be sure of the fit. To check for fit of bust cup, notice if the flesh seems to bulge over the edges of the cup. If so, the cup is too small. The cup should fit the breast smoothly, with definite division between the breasts. If breasts are crowded toward sides or center, the cup may be too small or the style may be wrong for you. Do not switch sizes and bust cups. A 34B is not the same as a 36A. If you cannot get the fit you want in one brand, try another. It may be slightly different in sizing, and fit you perfectly.

Style of brassiere

The style of the brassiere may have a great deal to do with whether you get a good fit. Because of many variations in body build, designers create different styles of bust cups to fit different contours. You may find that one style of brassiere in the same size, bust cup, and brand will fit you better than another style of the same size, bust cup, and brand.

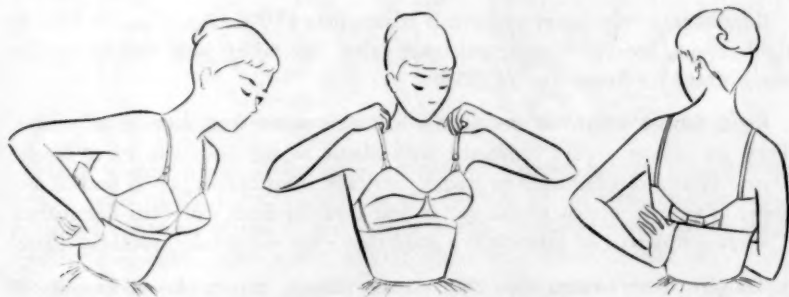
Some brassieres are designated as narrow, medium, and wide on the basis of the division between the breasts. If your brassiere does not give a good division between breasts, but the size and cup seem to be right, try a different style.

The larger the breasts, the more support the brassiere should give. This may come form a wider band under the bust, wider shoulder straps and a wider band in back, and the use of more rigid fabrics. Waist length or long line brassieres give good support for the larger bust.

Cup styles with circular stitching or light felt reinforcement on the undercup give more uplift for the heavier bust.

How to put on a brassiere correctly

Your brassiere will fit better if you put it on correctly. Loosen the shoulder straps, and slip the straps over the shoulders. Lean forward from the waist, so that breasts fall into position in the cups. Hold the brassiere as you straighten up, and slide your hands around to fasten the back closings. Adjust shoulder straps so that breasts come into their normal position on the chest wall. This is usually about half way between shoulder and elbow, but will vary with body build and maturity of figure. Avoid pulling up the straps so they cut into the shoulder or give an unnatural uplift to the breasts. Run a finger under the band across the back to make the brassiere fit smoothly (Figure 7). Test the fit when you are seated as well as standing. Good posture can improve the fit of a brassiere.



7. Put the brassiere on correctly for a better fit.

Check the fit

Be sure the brassiere fits by checking these items:

1. Are the bust cups filled out properly?
2. Is there complete division between bust cups?
3. Does the underbust band fit snugly, but not tightly?
4. Do the straps lie flat, without cutting into the shoulders, and stay in place without slipping off the shoulder?
5. Does the brassiere lie smoothly across the back and is it anchored beneath the shoulder blades, even when you lift your arms?

GIRDLES AND CORSETS

Choose the right garment

Your occupation, your body build, the type and distribution of flesh are all determining factors in your choice of a girdle or corset.

A foundation garment should fit your way of living as well as your body. If you do strenuous work, stand for long periods, walk a great deal, lift and bend, you will want a garment that supports the back and abdominal muscles, but which will allow plenty of freedom. If you sit a good part of the day, you will need a garment that is comfortable, gives firm control through the hip and thigh region, and molds the figure into smooth lines.

Soft flesh can be more easily controlled and distributed than firm flesh. The woman with soft flesh may require a smaller garment than her measurements indicate in order to give the control and support that her figure needs. The figure with firm flesh can wear a garment with more resiliency. A foundation garment should control but never constrict.

Control in a foundation garment is accomplished by the use of elastic fabrics, rigid fabrics, boning, lacings, and inner belts. Several of these may be used in one garment for firmer control (Figure 8).

Rigid fabrics which do not stretch are used when firm support is needed. They are almost always combined with elastic so the body can move freely. Elastic fabrics can be made to stretch vertically, horizontally, or in both directions. Two-way stretch elastic molds and controls flesh, but does not flatten. Therefore this type of garment is a good choice for the slender, youthful figure.

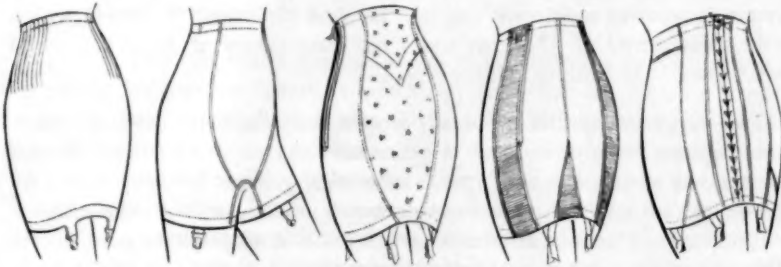
To give more control than the two-way stretch, panels of one-way stretch elastic are used at back and front; these control and flatten prominent curves

while giving comfort, especially when the wearer is seated. Girdles with panels of rigid fabrics give even more control. If the girdle has panels of rigid fabric at sides, as well as back and front, it can slim a large hipline of soft flesh.

Further control and flattening is accomplished by the use of boning. Boning also is used to keep girdles from wrinkling and rolling over at the top. When you buy a boned garment, check the length of the boning when you are seated. If the boning is too long, shorter boning can be inserted. Boning should curve with the body as it moves. This type of garment often has a zipper closure. Be sure the zipper does not rest on the hip bone.

Lacings are used in a predominantly cloth garment to support a fleshy abdomen and control fleshy hips. The greatest support and control is exerted over the parts of the figure nearest where the lacings are placed. Therefore, front lacers are suggested if the abdomen is large in proportion to the hips. Back lacers are suggested if the hips are large in proportion to the waist, and if the back needs relief from strain or pain. Lacings permit some adjustment to the figure, but this type of garment is designed to give the best support when the edges of the laced opening are an equal distance apart for the entire length of the garment.

The garment of rigid fabric with an inner belt is designed to lift and support the figure with a large or pendulous abdomen. It also gives support to the back, thus relieving strain and nervous tension. It enables the woman to keep erect posture and to do physical work without tiring quickly.



8. Fabric and construction determine the amount of control possible.

Many women prefer a one piece garment or corselet for the long smooth line it gives to the figure. There are many styles of corselets, and garments suitable for slender or full figures can be found. Half-size garments are available for the shorter woman who prefers a corselet. When the bust, waist, and hip measurements are not in proportion, the long smooth line can be better achieved with a girdle, or corset, and a long line brassiere than with a corselet.

Choose the best fit

There are many variations in women's figures and proportions. However, designers of girdles and corsets have typed figures into three classes: the average, full hip, and straight hip. These classifications have nothing to do with size of the body but are determined by the difference between waist and hip measurements.



9. Find your hip type: hip measure less waist measure.

Size and hip type

To find your girdle size and type, take a snug but not tight measurement at the natural waistline. Measure snugly over the fullest part of the hips, and subtract the waist measurement from the hip measurement (Figure 9).

If the difference is:

- between 8 and 11 inches—figure is average
- 11 inches or over—figure is a full hip type
- less than 8 inches—figure is a straight hip type

For example, if your waist measurement is 28 inches, and your hip measurement is 38 inches, the difference is 10 inches and you would take an average type girdle. Most women fall into the average type, so there is a larger selection of girdles for this type of figure.

The more rigid girdles and corsets are selected by waist measurement, with a size increase every inch; each size has the three hip types. A woman with a waist measurement of 27 inches and a hip measurement of 40 inches, would select a size 27 in girdle of full hip type.

Two-way stretch girdles are usually labeled small, medium, and large. Some manufacturers make extra small or petite sizes and extra large sizes. Because the two-way stretch does not flatten, a more rigid garment is a better choice for the figure with soft flesh. The two-way stretch usually does not come in different hip types. The large amount of stretch makes it adaptable to many figures. This type of girdle is bought by waist measurement.

If the waist measures:

- less than 24 inches—buy extra small
- 24 to 26 inches—small
- 26 to 28 inches—medium
- 28 to 30 inches—large
- over 31 inch waist—extra large

A front or back laced garment is often fitted in a size 2 inches smaller than the waist. This allows for a two-inch parallel opening. Follow the directions in the catalogue, or the corsetiere's suggestion when buying a laced garment.

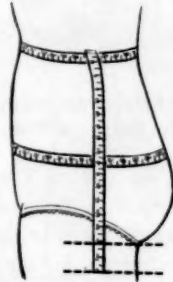
Length

The length of the garment is not related to the height of the person. It is a measure from waist to thigh. To get an idea of length, measure at the side of the body from the natural waistline to just under the buttocks and add 2 inches (Figure 10).

If this measurement is:

- 14 inches or less you need a short garment
- 15 to 16 inches—medium length
- 17 inches or over—long

This is only a guide, and varies somewhat with the type of flesh and hip development. Try the girdle on to be sure it is long enough for sitting, but not so long that it will interfere with walking. If it rides up as you move, it is too short or too tight over the hips. If the girdle has a stretch back, it should be fitted about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the buttocks, as you stand. If it has a rigid back, it should come about 2 or $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the buttocks.



10. Measure length at side of figure from waist to below buttocks plus 2 inches.

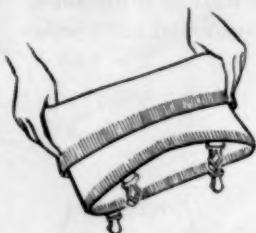
When the girdle length is given on the label of a two-way stretch garment, this usually indicates the length to which the girdle will stretch when worn. For girdles made of non-stretch fabrics, the length on the label means the actual measurement, since they stretch little on the body. Girdle length usually indicates the length from waist to lower edge, unless over-all length is designated. Many girdles are intended to fit an inch or more above the waist. These built-up waistline garments help control the waistline bulge. When you try on this type of girdle, sit down in it to be sure the top does not poke into the breasts.

When you buy a pantie girdle, be sure that it is long enough from waist to crotch. There should be no binding at crotch or thighs when you are seated or moving about.

The correct length of hose allows the girdle to be anchored in proper position, without undue strain on the hose, and without pulling the girdle from its correct fitting position on the body.

Alterations

Minor alterations may be needed in a foundation garment for a good fit. However, if many alterations seem necessary, you probably can find a better fitting garment. Extensive alterations may throw the garment out of line. Alterations which can be made safely are: adjustment of garter length, adjustment in length of bones, waistline darts, darts at bottom of girdle to cup it in, and small darts at bust cup.



11. Fold over unboned girdle before putting it on.

How to put on a girdle

An easy way to get into an unboned girdle is to fold it in half, turning the top out over the lower portion (Figure 11). Step into the girdle, carefully pulling it up to its proper position on the hips. Be sure it is centered on the body. Grasp the top of the girdle with finger tips—not nails—and roll up to waistline. Fasten all hose supporters as they hang, fastening back ones first.

To put on a boned garment with closure, open slide fastener and hooks. Step into the girdle, and pull it slightly above the point at which it is to be worn. Be sure that it is centered correctly on the body. Close the fastenings before pulling the garment down into position. Fasten supporters.

Any foundation garment which is worn properly and is the right choice for the figure, should give uplift in front and downpull in back.

Check the fit

When being fitted in a girdle or corset, you should sit, walk, and bend in it to be sure the garment will be comfortable. Ask yourself these questions:

1. Does the garment provide the support needed for the abdomen?
2. Does it control, yet permit easy breathing?
3. Does the waistline fit snugly, but without pinching or gaping?
4. Does the garment ride up as you sit and move?
5. Is the boning of the correct length and placement so as not to dig into the flesh?
6. When you sit in the garment, is there a roll of flesh either above or below the garment? Is the garment too tight across the thighs?
7. Are many alterations necessary?

REMEMBER—if a garment isn't comfortable when you buy it, it doesn't fit.

CORSELETS

The corselet is a full length one piece garment that gives an unbroken smooth line to the figure. Unless the corselet is custom-made to individual measurements, it may be difficult for the woman of irregular proportions to obtain a good fit with this one piece garment. A girdle, or corset, and a long line bra may be a better choice for her. Some manufacturers are making corselets in half-size proportions to fit the shorter waisted woman.

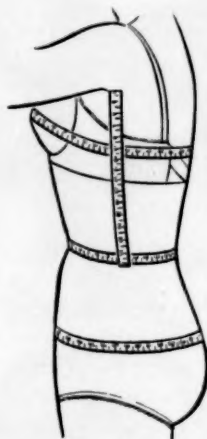
Size

To determine the size for a corselet, take an easy measurement over the fullest part of the bust. Then subtract from this bust measurement one of the amounts given below, depending on the size of the bust cup. (To find the size of the bust cup, follow directions given on page 8).

If bust cup size is:

- A cup—subtract 1 inch
- B cup—subtract 2 inches
- C cup—subtract 3 inches
- D cup—subtract 4 inches

For example, for the figure with an overbust measurement of 36 inches, and a B cup, the correct size corselet would be a 34B.



12. For a corselet, take four measurements: bust, waist, hip, and back underarm to waist.

The overbust measurement determines size, but figure type must also be considered in the one piece garment. As for the girdle, take a snug waist measurement and a measure over the fullest part of the hips. Subtract the waist measurement from the hip measurement to give the hip type. See page 12.

A fourth measurement is needed to determine if a half-size garment will give the best fit. Measure from the back underarm at the joint where the arm joins the body to the exact waistline (Figure 12). If this measurement is 8 inches or less, a half-size garment is needed instead of average or regular length.

Corselets come in a variety of fabrics and constructions, as do girdles and corsets. A study of the control needed for the figure, the amount and placement of elastic and rigid fabrics, will help you choose the corselet to give the support you want.

Check the fit

Before you buy a corselet, satisfy yourself on the following points:

1. Is the corselet fitted well up under the bust cups?
2. Do the shoulder straps dig into the flesh?
3. Is there a good uplift for the breasts?
4. Does the corselet fit smoothly at the waistline with no fabric wrinkles?
5. Is the garment comfortable as you sit in it?
6. Is the skirt of the garment long enough so that it does not ride up as you sit or walk?

LAUNDERING OF FOUNDATION GARMENTS

Frequent laundering will prolong the life of foundation garments. Body oils and perspiration are more harmful to elastics than soap and water. For maximum wear, it is best to wash foundation garments after every other wearing. In warm weather wash after every wearing.

Close the zipper and other fastenings before washing a girdle. Wash in warm water and mild soap suds. Squeeze gently, but do not rub or wring. The garment can be soaked from 3 to 10 minutes in suds, and stubborn soils can be removed by rubbing with a soft brush. Rinse several times in warm water. Shape the garment, roll in a heavy towel, and press out the extra moisture. Dry flat on a towel, or over a rod or line away from heat and sunlight. Smooth the garment with your hands before it is dried. If dried with care, the fabric will not have to be pressed. If you prefer to press the fabric, set the iron at low and press on the wrong side while the garment is damp. Never touch the elastic sections with an iron.

In caring for your foundation garments, be sure to read the directions which are on the label and follow them carefully.

Two or more garments should be worn alternately to allow frequent laundering, and to allow the elastic to rest and regain its full stretch. Two garments worn alternately will outlast two garments worn consecutively.



Cooperative Extension Service, New York State College of Home Economics at Cornell University and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. In furtherance of the Acts of Congress May 8, June 30 1914. M. C. Bond, Director of Extension, Ithaca, New York.